



Mexican Wolf Blue Range Reintroduction Project Monthly Update

February 1 - 28, 2009

The following is a summary of Mexican Wolf Reintroduction Project activities in Arizona on the Apache-Sitgreaves National Forests (ASNF) and Fort Apache Indian Reservation (FAIR) and in New Mexico on the Apache National Forest (ANF) and Gila National Forest (GNF). Non-tribal lands involved in this Project are collectively known as the Blue Range Wolf Recovery Area (BRWRA). Additional Project information can be obtained by calling (928) 339-4329 or toll free at (888) 459-9653, or by visiting the Arizona Game and Fish Department Web site at <http://www.azgfd.gov/wolf> or by visiting the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Web site at <http://www.fws.gov/southwest/es/mexicanwolf>. Past updates may be viewed on either Web site, or interested parties may sign up to receive this update electronically by visiting <http://www.azgfd.gov/signup>. This update is a public document and information in it can be used for any purpose. The Reintroduction Project is a multi-agency cooperative effort among the Arizona Game and Fish Department (AGFD), New Mexico Department of Game and Fish (NMDGF), USDA Forest Service (USFS), USDA-Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service, Wildlife Services (USDA-APHIS WS), U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) and the White Mountain Apache Tribe (WMAT). Other entities, including private individuals and nongovernmental organizations, cooperate through the Project's Adaptive Management Work Group (AMWG) that meets periodically in Arizona and New Mexico.

To view weekly wolf telemetry flight location information or the 3-month wolf distribution map, please visit <http://www.azgfd.gov/wolf>. On the home page, go to the "Wolf Location Information" heading on the right side of the page near the top and scroll to the specific location information you seek.

Please report any wolf sightings or suspected livestock depredations to: (928) 339-4329 or toll free at (888) 459-9653. To report incidents of take or harassment of wolves, please call the AGFD 24-hour dispatch (Operation Game Thief) at (800) 352-0700.

Numbering System: Mexican wolves are given an identification number recorded in an official studbook that tracks their history. Capital letters (M = Male, F = Female) preceding the number indicate adult animals 24 months or older. Lower case letters (m = male, f = female) indicate wolves younger than 24 months or pups. The capital letter "A" preceding the letter and number indicate alpha wolves.

Definitions: A "wolf pack" is defined as two or more wolves that maintain an established territory. In the event that one of the two alpha (dominant) wolves dies, the remaining alpha

wolf, regardless of pack size, retains the pack status. The packs referenced in this update contain at least one wolf with a radio telemetry collar attached to it. The Interagency Field Team (IFT) recognizes that wolves without radio telemetry collars may also form packs. If the IFT confirms that wolves are associating with each other and are resident within the same home range, they will be referenced as a pack.

CURRENT POPULATION STATUS

At the end of February 2009, the collared population consisted of 27 wolves with functional radio collars dispersed among 10 packs and four single wolves. Two wolves, F1118 from the Luna pack and a single, M1039, have not been located during aerial telemetry flights since early February, and are now considered fate unknown. These wolves were not included in the February collared population total. Some other uncollared wolves are known to be associating with radio-collared wolves, and others are separate from known packs.

On February 11, project personnel darted and captured F1054 from the ground, north of St. Johns, Arizona. This location was approximately 30 miles outside of the BRWRA. The IFT originally translocated this wolf into the Fox Mountain Pack territory in New Mexico in January. After a general health inspection at the White Mountain Veterinary Clinic in Pinetop, Arizona, the IFT placed this wolf into a chain-link fence pen within the Fox Mountain Pack territory in an attempt to allow the pack to locate it. After several days, the IFT determined that, due to the uncertain breeding status of F1054, a different female wolf from captivity should replace it in the holding pen to maximize the potential of providing a mate for the alpha male wolf (AM1038) of the Fox Mountain Pack. Project personnel removed F1054 from the pen and transported it to the Sevilleta Wolf Management Facility (Sevilleta) in New Mexico. The IFT determined that another female wolf eligible for translocation into the BRWRA, F1053, would provide a viable option as a mate for AM1038. Project personnel placed F1053 into the pen on February 17. On February 25, the IFT released F1053 from the holding pen. On February 28, the IFT found F1053 dead. This mortality is under investigation.

On February 18, the IFT received a report from a licensed trapper in New Mexico regarding a wolf that had been captured in a legally-set trap. The IFT responded to the site on February 19; determined that the wolf caught in the trap was F1106 and it didn't suffer any injury as a result of being trapped; then subsequently transported and released it back into the BRWRA at the Gila Flat release site in New Mexico.

IN ARIZONA:

Bluestem Pack (collared AF521, AM806 and F1042)

Throughout the first half of February, the IFT located the Bluestem Pack in its traditional territory on the ASNF. Later in the month, AF521 began to travel separately from AM806 and F1042. The IFT will continue to monitor the pack's travel patterns and dynamics to determine if F1042 is now the new alpha female of the Bluestem Pack.

Hawks Nest Pack (collared M1044, AF1110 and mp1155)

Throughout February, the IFT located the Hawks Nest Pack in its traditional territory on the

ASNF.

Paradise Pack (collared AM795 and AF1056)

During February, the IFT located the Paradise Pack in its traditional territory on the northern portions of ASNF and FAIR.

Rim Pack (collared AF858 and AM1107)

Throughout February, the IFT located the Rim Pack within its traditional home range in the central portion of the ASNF.

M619 (collared)

During February, the IFT located M619 in the north and central portions of the ASNF.

F1054 (collared)

On February 11, project personnel captured F1054 outside the BRWRA, north of St. Johns. The wolf was placed into a holding pen in the Fox Mountain Pack territory in western New Mexico in an effort to allow the pack to locate it. The IFT removed F1054 to captivity at Sevilleta on February 17, and placed F1053 into the pen to maximize the potential of providing a mate for AM1038 of the Fox Mountain Pack.

ON THE FAIR:

Bacho Pack (collared AM990 and fp1154)

Throughout February, the IFT located the Bacho Pack within its traditional territory on the FAIR.

Lofer Pack

The IFT did not document any new members of the Lofer Pack in February. The previous alpha female of the pack, AF1056, is now the alpha female of the Paradise Pack. The IFT has documented uncollared wolves as being associated with AF1056 when it was considered a member of this pack.

IN NEW MEXICO:

Dark Canyon (collared AM992 and AF923)

Throughout February, the IFT located the Dark Canyon Pack within its traditional territory in the west-central portion of the GNF.

Luna Pack (collared M1156)

Throughout February, the IFT located the M1156 of Luna Pack in its traditional territory in the central portion of the GNF. In early February, the IFT lost contact with the radio collar on F1118, and the wolf's status is now considered fate unknown.

Middle Fork Pack (collared AM871 and AF861)

Throughout February, the IFT located the Middle Fork Pack in the northern portion of the Gila Wilderness and central portion of the GNF.

San Mateo Pack (collared AF903 and AM1114)

Throughout February, the IFT located the San Mateo Pack in the north-central portion of the GNF.

Fox Mountain Pack (collared AM1038, mp1157, mp1158 and mp1161)

Throughout February, the IFT located the Fox Mountain Pack in the western portion of the GNF.

Laredo (collared F1028)

During February, the IFT documented F1028 in the central portion of the GNF.

F1115 (collared)

Throughout February, the IFT located F1115 in the central portion of the Gila Wilderness.

F1106 (collared)

During February, the IFT located F1106 in the southern portion of the GNF.

MORTALITIES

In late February, the IFT found F1053 dead in New Mexico. Law enforcement agents investigated the scene and collected the carcass for necropsy. The wolf's death is currently under investigation.

INCIDENTS

The IFT investigated one potential livestock depredation incident during February and confirmed it as a wolf depredation. The summary is as follows:

On February 10, Wildlife Services personnel investigated a dead calf east of Vernon, Arizona, and determined that a single wolf killed the calf. The IFT assigned the depredation to an uncollared wolf.

CAPTIVE MANAGEMENT

On February 17, the IFT assisted the staff at Sevilleta in returning F1054 to captivity and with the capture and handling of F1053 prior to its eventual release in New Mexico.

Project personnel conducted breeding observations in February, and they observed a tie indicating breeding between M660 and F749. Both animals are potential release candidates for the approved initial release this summer in Arizona.

On February 1, project personnel discovered a litter of six pups, estimated at one day old or less, born to F797. Personnel had administered Deslorelin, an experimental contraceptive, to F797 on November 20, 2008, to induce ovulation prior to when male Mexican wolves become fertile, thus preventing breeding. M732, mate to F797, was somehow fertile and capable of impregnating F797. One of the pups was stillborn, and four died within six days of birth. Only

one pup, fp1167, has survived. This issue is being closely monitored by the Research Department at the St. Louis Zoo.

COMMUNICATION AND COORDINATION

On February 5, Jeff Dolphin presented a training session to 35 individuals at a radio telemetry workshop that was conducted at the annual Arizona and New Mexico Wildlife Society Meetings in Gallup, New Mexico.

On February 7, Beth Orning-Tschampl presented an overview of the Mexican Wolf Reintroduction Project to 90 attendees at the Arizona and New Mexico Wildlife Society Meetings.

On February 19, Maggie Dwire presented an overview of the Mexican Wolf Recovery Program to a work group of approximately 20 individuals from the Sierra Club at Sevilleta.

PROJECT PERSONNEL

Allison Greenleaf left her volunteer FWS position with the project in February. Thank you for your hard work on the project, Allison!

REWARDS OFFERED

The USFWS is offering a reward of up to \$10,000, the AGFD Operation Game Thief is offering a reward of up to \$1,000, and the NMDGF is offering a reward of up to \$1,000 for information leading to the conviction of the individual(s) responsible for the shooting deaths of Mexican wolves. A variety of non-governmental organizations and private individuals have pledged an additional \$40,000 for a total reward amount of up to \$52,000, depending on the information provided.

Individuals with information they believe may be helpful are urged to call one of the following agencies: USFWS special agents in Mesa, Arizona, at (480) 967-7900, in Alpine, Arizona, at (928) 339-4232, or in Albuquerque, New Mexico, at (505) 346-7828; the WMAT at (928) 338-1023 or (928) 338-4385; AGFD Operation Game Thief at (800) 352-0700; or NMDGF Operation Game Thief at (800) 432-4263. Killing a Mexican wolf is a violation of the Federal Endangered Species Act and can result in criminal penalties of up to \$50,000, and/or not more than one year in jail, and/or a civil penalty of up to \$25,000.